

Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent
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Rep. Dent says Medicare bill won't save money, could cost seniors drug availability

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15) today voted against HR 4, a bill that attempts to set price controls under Medicare Part D, the prescription drug program, by dictating that the government bureaucracy negotiates drug prices. Congressman Dent opposed the bill because it will limit seniors' choices and the availability of drugs while providing little or no savings to the government or to beneficiaries.

"This bill will not accomplish either of its stated purposes," Congressman Dent said. "It will not help seniors with their drug costs. And it will not save the government any money."

Furthermore, Congressman Dent said, "HR 4 encourages rationing; those drugs for which prices cannot be negotiated simply will *not* be provided."

The Congressional Budget Office, an independent investigative agency, says that the bill would not save any money because "the Secretary would be unable to negotiate prices across the broad range of covered Part D drugs that are more favorable than those obtained by prescription drug plans under current law." (See letter)

Proponents of HR 4 compared Medicare D with the Veterans Administration prescription drug plan, which serves far fewer recipients.

Also, many of the drugs that are available through Medicare drug plans are unavailable to VA beneficiaries.

“The lack of choice and availability of product is perhaps the reason why nearly 40 percent — over 1 million— of the 3.8 million Medicare beneficiaries eligible for VA health benefits have opted for inclusion in Medicare Part D,” Congressman Dent said. “Since no money is to be saved here, why change a system, Medicare Part D, which is already working?”

HR 4 was opposed by the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the ALS Association (Lou Gehrig’s disease advocacy group), and the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

“It is my fervent hope that the Senate will not pass this legislation, and if it does, that the President will veto it,” Congressman Dent said.

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